Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

MODERN THEOLOGY AND THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL

I. THE CONTRIBUTION OF MODERN THEOLOGY TO THE EQUIPMENT OF THE PREACHER[1]

WILLIAM ADAMS BROWN, PH.D., D.D.
Roosevelt Professor of Systematic Theology in Union Theological Seminary
Author of "Christian Theology in Outline"

In the fall of 1911 Professor Brown was invited by the Congregationalists of Washington to deliver a series of theological lectures at their state conference at Seattle. In 1913 these lectures were repeated at the Preachers' Institutes of the Southern Methodists at Fayette, Missouri and Georgetown, Texas.

The response to the lectures on the part of those who heard them was so generous, and the requests for their publication so many, that they are here reprinted, in the hope that they may carry to a larger circle than could be reached by the spoken voice the author's conviction that the final test of every theology must be its preachableness, and his hope that, judged by this standard, modern theology may prove to have something of value to offer to the ministers of today. For this reason, further, Professor Brown has left this material in lecture rather than essay form.

We are all familiar with the effect upon a landscape produced by a change of position. The higher we rise the more nearly we see things in their true perspective. But when we descend into the valley our angle of vision changes and we lose our sense of proportion. The objects that lie near bulk large and shut out the distant view. When we stand by the lake shore it seems only a little way across. It is only when we look down on its surface from above that we measure its breadth truly.

The experience has its analogy in the inner life. Change of mental position is apt to have as its first effect a disturbance of mental values. The mind, too, has its hilltops and its valleys, and when we leave the former and descend into the latter we lose our sense of spiritual proportion.

This is true even when the change is for the better. We may leave our vantage ground of vision because we have seen a higher peak that commands a wider horizon. We descend to climb again, but while we are in the valley the distant view is gone.

In the Christian church we are passing through a period of such spiritual transition. There are many of our contemporaries whose religious experience is a valley experience. They have left the heights where they once stood secure, and are now living in the lowlands. They are concerned with the little and the near. The duties of the day and the hour, or it may be of the generation, have shut out the broader vista of eternity. They have lost sight, for the moment, of the great peaks that have been the landmarks of religion in the past.

---

[1] A portion of this lecture appeared in the *Southern Methodist Review* for January, 1912, under the title, "Modern Theology and the Preaching of the Gospel."

There are many reasons for this shifting of interest. The pressure of life is one cause. The inventions and discoveries of the last century have multiplied the claims upon our attention to an extent undreamed of by earlier generations. There are so many things to be done and to be learned that there are not hours enough in the day to meet the crowding demands, and the greater questions that require leisure are necessarily postponed.

But underlying these more obvious reasons there is a more fundamental cause. Our angle of vision has shifted. The great movement that we call modern science has revolutionized our view of the universe. It has taught us to think of many things as stable that we have regarded as changing, and mobile that we had supposed to be fixed. It has given us a new astronomy, a new chemistry, a new physics, a new history, a new psychology, a new sociology. Beliefs that have grown hoary with antiquity are challenged, habits that have persisted from time immemorial are abandoned, and we live in constant expectation of some new discovery which shall render the latest word of present-day science obsolete.

It is inevitable that such an atmosphere should react upon the spiritual life. Where everything else is changing we cannot expect religion to remain unchanged. But what the change is likely to be, and how far it is likely to extend, to many is not yet clear. They know only that they have no longer the same unquestioning confidence in the old. What the new will be like which is to take its place, they do not yet know. In religion, as on other sides of life, they can see only the immediate present.

One of the marks of this spiritual foreshortening is the decline of doctrinal preaching. The ministers of an older generation loved to dwell upon the great themes of religion. They preached about God and the soul, sin and salvation, judgment and immortality, the deity of Christ and his atonement. But today these subjects are no longer the staples of preaching. They are touched on only incidentally; often they are passed over altogether. The consciousness of a divine revelation to which one may hold with confidence amid the fluctuations of human opinion is less vivid today. Even when the older doctrines are not questioned they are no longer in the foreground. Men think of them as dogmas which have come down to us from the past with which we cannot dispense, at least not yet. But for the present work of the church, for our dealing with men and women, in the needs and sorrows and temptations of their daily living, the less we have to do with them the better. What the minister needs above all things is an acquaintance with the actual facts of life. Let him then study the sciences that deal with these facts: economics, sociology, ethics, psychology, pedagogy, if you will. But theology, we are told, belongs to a past day and you cannot any longer hope to interest people in it.

Explicable as this attitude is, it is none the less unfortunate, for it involves the surrender of the historic ideal of Protestantism. The Reformation was an attempt to rescue the realities of religion from the speculations of the theologians and to open the way for the simplest believer to the very heart and citadel of faith. Theology, as Luther and his successors conceived it, is the systematic exposition of the gospel. It is the science that tries to express in simple and intelligible language the great convictions by which the soul lives. So far from being content simply to hand down what has been received from the past, it is its function to interpret the meaning of religion to the present, to give answer, and, so far as it can, to justify its answer, to the ultimate questions of the soul: the question as to the meaning and the purpose of life, the question as to the nature of God, and as to his relation to the soul of man, the question as to the destiny of the individual and of society, and the way in which that destiny may best be realized. These are the questions which the mind of man has always been trying to answer. If the theology of the past seems uninteresting to us, that is because we have been trying to live upon other people's answers instead of trying to answer our own questions for ourselves.

You will agree with me, then, I am sure, that if this be the true definition of theology it is something with which the preacher cannot dispense without loss. He is trying to win men from a life of selfishness and sin to a life of consecration and brotherhood, and he needs to understand clearly just what he proposes to do, and to express this in words that cannot be misunderstood. We wish to make men Christians. Well, what does it mean to be a Christian? Who is this Christ whom we are asked to trust and follow? We are trying to persuade men to believe in God. Who and what is God in whom we are asking men to believe? We warn men of a judgment to come, but what is the nature of this judgment? What are the principles on which it rests, and what reason have we for believing that there is another life which follows this, which ought to be taken into the account? Here surely are questions of the highest practical moment for the daily life. Economics and politics and education and psychology are all very well, but after all, they are concerned with means. What is the end which these means are designed to promote? What is the purpose of life? That is the question which theology seeks to answer. For a time it may be crowded out by more engrossing interests, but we are bound to come back to it in the end.

It is to this larger question that I would speak in the lectures that follow. I believe that the present loss of interest in theology is destined to be temporary. Indeed, there are many signs that it is already passing. Already we are beginning to emerge from the thickets through which we have been struggling to heights that command a broader view. Slowly, but none the less surely, we are beginning to recover our vision of the eternal realities, of which for a time we had lost sight, only to find them more majestic and satisfying than ever. It is well that we should pause for a moment and measure the gain and loss. I invite you therefore to look with me at the old view from a new viewpoint. What is the place of our Christian religion in the new world? What has science taught us about God and man, Christ and the Bible, sin and salvation? What contribution, in a word, has modern theology to make to the equipment of the preacher?

Now, I know that here I touch on delicate ground, for there are many people to whom science and religion seem inconsistent ideas. Science is to them the great destroyer. It is forever challenging the old, and its habit of persistent questioning seems inconsistent with that attitude of reverence and submission which is the primary demand of religion. In the name of science have not theologians been attacking the most sacred traditions of the past? Have they not torn the Bible to pieces? Have they not overthrown the authority of the creeds? Have they not rewritten the history of the church, and, in place of the clear-cut definite system in which we were brought up as children, left us simply a mass of confused and conflicting theories between which we are helpless to choose?

But it needs only a moment's thought to show that such a view is based upon a complete misconception. What do we mean by the scientific method? Science is simply glorified common-sense. It is the application to the sphere of knowledge of principles which have been found useful in other departments of life; such principles, for example, as thoroughness, system, open-mindedness, and faith. To be scientific means that you are not content to base your judgment upon part of the facts, but that you insist upon having them all before you or, at least, all that it is possible for you to gather. It means, further, that you group the facts in an orderly manner, putting like with like, and noting the smallest difference in form or structure. It means that you approach each new question with an open mind, ready to discard the conclusions of the past if good reason appear for so doing, or to modify them in any particular in which the evidence shall seem to require it. It means, finally, that you have an undying faith that this world is a reasonable world, and that loving, persistent, patient devotion to the cause of truth will be rewarded in the end by success. Surely there is nothing in all this to be afraid of. It is simply, I repeat, the consistent application on a large scale and over a wide area of the principles which as individuals we have all found practically useful in the conduct of our daily living.

Take modern medicine. I suppose there is no department of human activity where the changes introduced by scientific method have been more numerous and more revolutionary. No one will be found today to question that they are changes for the better. But it did not seem so to the men to whom they were first suggested. We can imagine a doctor of the pre-scientific age addressing the innovators of his own profession in words like these: "Why ask me to accept your new theories in medicine? Has the body changed? Are the laws of health different? Are not the diseases from which we suffer the same which afflicted men in the days when Jesus healed the man sick of the palsy and restored the lunatic to a sound mind?

Is the experience of mankind for two thousand years to be discarded overnight to make room for your untried panaceas?"

We know very well the answer to this question. There has been no change in the laws of health. The enemies which attack the body are the same that they have always been, and the principles on which their defeat depends have not altered, but we have learned more about those principles than we once knew. We understand the mechanism of the body better and so we are able to apply the needed remedy more intelligently. We have been studying the problem of disease scientifically, and this enables us to do today things which we could not previously have done.

It is just so in religion. We have no new gospel, but we have a new method of approach to the gospel. The laws of spiritual health have not changed, and the enemies against which the soul of man needs to be protected have not altered, but we have learned more about spiritual law than we once knew, and so are able to approach the problem of spiritual healing more intelligently. And here again this change for the better is the result of the application of scientific method to religion.

Now, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. The justification of science in any realm is the practical effects which it produces, and these are of two kinds. In the first place, it puts into our hands new powers for use; and in the second place, it gives us a new point of view.

I say, it puts new powers into our hands for use. Illustrations meet us on every hand. I have spoken of the modern medicine. It is science that has given us the antiseptic treatment in surgery; it is science which has given us our serums and our antitoxins; science has wiped out smallpox; science has taught us that tuberculosis is a curable disease, and every year is making new inroads into the realm of the old enemy, sickness.

It is so in every department of human experience. Science, I say, puts new tools into our hands. It has given us the steam engine and the automobile, and the telephone and the telegraph, and now, at last, the aeroplane and the dirigible. It has made it possible for me to go from Maine to California in six days, and from Vancouver to Yokohama in a dozen.

Side by side with these new powers, and scarcely less important, is the new point of view which modern science has introduced. It has taught us for one thing to think of the world as a unity; for it has shown us that wherever we go, even if we go to Arcturus, or the North Star, we are face to face everywhere and always with the same unchanging laws. It has taught us, further, to think of the world as trustworthy, responding to our appeal, so that when we do our part we can be perfectly sure that the result will follow. It has taught us, finally, that the world is meaningful, that through all the changes of the centuries one great purpose runs, one law of development which science calls evolution, but faith interprets as progress.

Now, what is true of science in general is true also of theological science. Here too its contribution is twofold. It has given us new tools which help us in our dealings with specific problems, and it has given us a new point of view. Both of these constitute a distinct practical contribution to the preacher's equipment, and enlarge his power of usefulness.

In the lectures that follow I hope to take up in some detail the first of these contributions and to illustrate by practical examples how modern theology helps us to meet specific difficulties and to solve particular problems. But in the time that remains in this lecture I want to speak of certain general results which form the common background from which we approach these detailed problems. I want to speak, in other words, of the new point of view which modern theology has given us.

It is important to do this because it is so easy to lose sight of the broader effects in the discussions of details. I have spoken of the popular impression of modern theology as destructive and unsettling. I believe that this is largely due to the fact that, in their interest in the various problems of their science, specialists in theology have not taken the time to gather up and to express in simple and intelligible language the great results on which they are all agreed.

Theologians, to be sure, are not the only persons of whom this is true. Every profession has its specialists, interested in their own peculiar problems and talking a language of their own which no one else can understand. But in the case of theology the consequences of misunderstanding are more serious than in the case of medicine or law, because of the nature of the subject-matter with which it deals. For theology has to do with religion, and religion—so at least religious people believe—is the supreme concern of the human soul. Moreover, religion is the one bit of business which cannot be done by proxy. Salvation, however far reaching may be its social consequences, is in its beginnings a matter of strictly individual concern. No man can commune with God vicariously. Each of us must do his own repenting, his own praying, his own believing.

Such, at least, is our Protestant conviction. Protestantism is democracy in religion. It is born of faith in the inherent relationship between the soul and God, in the inalienable right of each individual to approach God for himself, in the adaptation of truth to conscience and of conscience to truth, in the efficacy and sufficiency of the Christian gospel, for all that man needs for his salvation, faith, and life.

For Protestants, therefore, it is not a light matter to introduce confusion into the realm of religion. If the gospel is obscured and its authority weakened, harm is done to more than the mind. The whole nature is affected, the springs of action are tapped, the heart is robbed of its accustomed outlet, and the result is spiritual poverty, anxiety, and ultimate despair.

I believe that it is the fear of some such result as this which accounts for the widespread distrust of the new theology. Those who look askance at the claims which have been made in its behalf are not necessarily narrow or unreasonable. They are, many of them, sincere and open-minded men, lovers of light and of progress, ready to accept whatever advances human knowledge and promotes human welfare. But they are sensible men, wishing to look before they leap. They know that a thing is not necessarily good because it is new. In their own souls they have put Christianity to the proof and have found it what Paul found it, the power of God unto salvation. They regard the gospel as God's best gift to man, and are jealous of any movement, no matter how plausibly commended, which robs it of its life-giving power. They know that criticism is no substitute for testimony, theory no substitute for experience, speculation no substitute for revelation. They are sure that the gospel which is to meet the needs of humanity must be definite, practical, authoritative; a message direct from the heart of God to the soul of man. Such a message they miss in the new theology, and for this reason they hold aloof from it.

It is important, therefore, at the outset that we get the right perspective. We need to distinguish the great results on which scholars as a whole are agreed, from the points of detail in which they differ. Let me sum up these results as briefly as I can. I will mention four.

The first contribution of modern theology to the preacher's equipment is the discovery that religion is one of the ultimate facts of life. It is not something outside of man which he can take or leave as he chooses. It is inwrought into his nature, a part of the very structure of his being, which he cannot maim or stifle without at the same time injuring himself.

The second contribution of modern theology is the insight that, while religion is universal, not all religion is equally valuable or equally satisfying. Religions differ in kind, and difference in kind means difference in worth.

In the third place, modern theology makes it clear that if there is to be a universal religion at all, it must be Christianity, and this for the simple reason that no other religion meets so completely and in so satisfying a way the permanent religious needs of mankind.

The fourth and last contribution of modern theology to practical religion—and the most important of all—is its renewed emphasis upon Christ as the center and norm of Christianity.

Let us take up these contributions one by one and consider their significance. In the first place, I say, modern science teaches us that religion is one of the ultimate facts of life. It is not something outside of man which he can take or leave as he chooses. It is inwrought into his nature, a part of the very structure of his being, which he cannot maim or stifle without at the same time injuring himself.

This is, to be sure, no new discovery. Theologians have long asserted that man was naturally religious. Tertullian went even farther and declared the soul was by nature Christian. But it is one thing to assert, and another to realize. Modern theology has furnished us with new evidence of the old fact, and so given it new freshness and vividness.

It has done this in various ways. The study of history is one way. However far we go back in time we find man looking up in adoration and worship to a being beyond himself. The study of comparative religion is another way. For three generations we have been observing the great civilizations of the East, and we find that they are religious through and through. Most effective and convincing (because nearest at hand) is the way of psychology. We are learning that the fundamental religious feelings—reverence, aspiration, dependence, submission, awe—are rooted in the nature of man, that they are as much a part of ourselves as the craving for food and the love of kind, that the desire for worship is as natural and as irrepressible as the desire for activity when one awakes in the morning, or of rest when one returns home at night—that it is not a question, in short, whether or not one will be religious, but only what kind of religion one will have.

This being the case, we have a new point of view for judging some contemporary phenomena which without this key would be perplexing. Take for example such a movement as modern socialism. Here is a creed which in the person of many of its adherents dispenses with what most of us have been brought up to consider the essentials of religion. It has no God; it leaves immortality an open question; yet it calls forth the passionate loyalty of tens of thousands of earnest men and women. How will you account for this fact? It is the religious nature which, having lost its old object, seeks a new outlet for its fervor and, in devotion to humanity, expends the store of consecration and of enthusiasm which former generations gave to God. Or, take Christian Science—that most singular of modern religions—what more pathetic witness could be found to the hunger of the soul for the divine than the quick response with which Mrs. Eddy's appeal has met, in spite of what seem to many of us its manifest contradictions and absurdities? Take our social settlements, and our societies of ethical culture. Take any one of the countless movements which are springing up outside the church, with their programs of social reform or of spiritual culture. These are not causes of discouragement, but of hope. They are witnesses to the deathless ideal which sleeps in every man. They are a challenge to our effort, an incentive to our faith. If we have not been able to win these men and women with our gospel, it is not because they are not open to it, but because we have not yet learned how to preach it as we should.

For it is not enough to be religious. The important thing is to be religious in the right way. And this brings me to the second contribution of modern theology to the preacher's equipment, namely, the discovery that while religion is universal, not all religion is equally valuable or equally satisfying. Religions differ in kind, and difference in kind means difference in worth.

This again is no new discovery. Indeed, I fear that it may seem the veriest commonplace. For generations the assertion of the supreme value of his own brand of religion, in comparison with all others, has been the stock in trade of the preacher. How many sermons we have heard whose theme has been the contrast between natural and revealed religion, the religion of reason and the religion of the Bible—the former, useful indeed, but not sufficient, pointing the way, but unable to reach the goal; the latter alone, with its supernatural revelation and its infallible book, able to give the certainty which man needs for salvation.

But here again, it is one thing to assert and another to realize. The difficulty has been that when we have questioned those who have offered us so ready a solution of our quest for the best religion, they have not always answered in the same way. The Catholic has pointed to Catholicism, and the Protestant to Protestantism, and within Protestantism each denomination has offered its own particular kind of Christianity as the truth of God, while outside we have seen the Jew claiming divine authority for Judaism, the Mahommedan for Mohammedanism, the Buddhist for Buddhism, and so on all along the line. If we are content to follow Mephistopheles' advice to Faust, and accept unquestioningly the teaching of our own denomination or church, we shall feel no difficulty, but if our minds are open and we wish a reason for the faith that is in us, the situation is, to say the least, perplexing.

Here modern theology has a distinct contribution to make. It has been studying the religions of the world scientifically, that is to say, in a systematic and orderly way, and it finds that, like all other objects of human knowledge when studied in this way, they fall into groups which differ from one another in interesting and instructive ways. There is, for example, the mystic group which is introspective and contemplative, seeking salvation in immediate communion with God and content to let this world go on its way to destruction without let or hindrance. There is the ethical group with its keen social interest, concerned for justice and mercy, with a divine sanction for human conduct and a divine judgment for human sin. There are the nature religions peopling the world with gods, but not yet having learned to differentiate the divine from the hills and the streams and the woods which are its abiding-place. There are the religions of authority with their insistence upon absolute and unqualified submission. And there are the religions of freedom, the Protestantisms of humanity, with their confidence in the individual and their recognition of the supremacy of conscience as the court of final appeal. These types recur again and again in the history of mankind. They not only characterize single religions; they reappear within each of the greater religions as the mark of smaller groups. They combine one with another in singular and unexpected ways. Their action and reaction explain the constant changes in the history of religion and give the study of it its ceaseless fascination.

But science not only shows us the fact of difference. It helps us to estimate its significance. It shows us the consequences which follow from the adoption of one or the other of these forms of religion, and we find that they are of momentous importance. If your religion is of the mystic type, introspective and self-centered, you will enter a monastery, or make your cell in a desert, or perhaps climb on a pillar like Simeon the Stylite, and the crying wrongs of the weak and the oppressed will remain unredressed. If your religion is one of pure authority, whether you call your master pope or caliph you will shut your eyes to the plain teachings of reason and blindly support your church in whatever it asks you to do or think. If your religion be a nature religion, you will magnify the physical and it may be will give free rein to passions which a more enlightened conscience will tell you should be held constantly in check. If your religion be ethical, you will adopt the Apostle James's definition as your own and realize that in ministering to the orphan and in succoring the widow you are doing the will of God.

Of all the pages of human history there is none more tragic but at the same time none more instructive than that which tells the story of religion. As we read it we are impressed with the incalculable harm which may be wrought in the life either of an individual or of a society by a bad religion—a religion, that is to say, which tries to suppress some essential need of human nature or, on the other hand, which panders to its infirmities or superstitions. We realize with new force the truth, which we have so often dismissed as a mere platitude, that it is not enough to be religious. One must be religious in the right way, and we ask ourselves what reason we have for believing that the religion we profess is really of this kind.

Here, too, modern theology has help to give. It tells us not only of the necessity of religion and of its differences; it gives us a standard for judging between them. It assures us that if there is to be a universal religion at all it must be Christianity, and this for the simple reason that no other religion meets so completely and in so plain and satisfying a way the permanent needs of humanity. Let me illustrate, if I can, what I mean.

I have spoken of the different types which are revealed by the study of comparative religion. But when we examine them more closely we find that for our present purpose they may all be reduced to two. The nature religions represent a stage through which man passes in his religious development, which is destined sooner or later to be outgrown, and which, as a matter of fact, has been outgrown in principle in all the greater religions. The religion of authority is the expression of a permanent instinct present in every age as the necessary corrective of an exaggerated individualism. It is the form in which the social acquisitions of the past are conserved and handed down to future generations. There remain two great types which in every age have confronted one another as rivals for the allegiance of the religious man: the mystic type and the ethical type—the religion which seeks contact with God in the immediate experience of the soul, and the religion which finds in the service of humanity the highest expression of worship. Each has its roots deep in the subsoil of human nature. Neither has been able to displace the other. The religion which is to win universal acceptance must make place for both.

I say it must make place for both, but it must do it in a consistent and satisfying way. It is not enough to place the two side by side and let them live their lives as best they can without inner understanding or harmony. Such an outward juxtaposition of competing and inconsistent types has taken place again and again in religious history and no one religion has the monopoly of it. Every great religion has its mystics and its moralists, its recluses and its agitators. But this of itself does not qualify it for world-supremacy.

What I have in mind is something

much more fundamental. I have in mind an inner harmony, a type of religion which satisfies the mystic's hunger for God and the moralist's passion for man in one and the same experience, a religion which is so conscious of the immanence of God that it feels him as the very life of the soul, and yet which knows that the God whom it worships is a personal God, the Father of many children, the ruler of society as well as of the individual, the mind that plans and the will that decrees, as well as the spirit that inbreathes. Only a religion which conceives God in such a way can hope for world-supremacy.

Such a religion is Christianity. Here at last we find the synthesis for which the whole history of religion is striving, the goal to which in every age it has been unconsciously pointing. This insight, painfully won as the result of an infinity of patient labor, is the third great contribution of modern theology to the preacher's equipment.

It is not easy to exaggerate its importance. It gives us a vantage ground in our appeal to men of other faiths which could not be attained in any other way. We do not come to them as if they were destitute of religion, but as the interpreter and completer of the religion they have. Is the man we are seeking one of the mystic type, forgetful, in his joy at the realized presence of God, of the claim of the neighbor who lies at his door? We have our word for him. We do not ask him to deny the reality of his experience, or question the fact of the omnipresence of the immanent God. We bring to him a completer revelation of the nature of the God he worships and bid him see his character revealed in the face of that Jesus who went about doing good.

Is it a case, on the other hand, of some zealous social reformer so intent on his effort to secure more tolerable conditions of living and a more just scale of remuneration that he has no room in his scheme of life for prayer? For him too we have our message. We do not want him to value man less but more. We want to enlarge his estimate of the capacity of humanity till it is broad enough to include fellowship with the God of all the earth. We point him to Jesus, the great servant, as in the silence of the mountain in solitary communion with the Father he gains strength for the next day's ministry. So by its inner adaptation to needs yet unrealized we commend the religion of Christ as the one religion perfectly adapted to satisfy the world's search for God.

I say, we commend the religion of Christ, and this brings me to the last of the contributions of modern science to practical religion, of which I shall have time to speak, namely, its renewed emphasis upon Christ as the center and norm of Christianity.

I have spoken of the appeal of Christianity to men of other faiths. It is an appeal which was never more widespread and never more effective than in our day. Already the new aids which modern science has put into the hands of our missionaries are beginning to produce their appropriate results. But there is one obstacle which hampers their efficiency, and that is the divisions which still exist among Christians themselves. We speak of Christianity as if it were something which everybody understood, and as to whose nature there could be no doubt. Yet as a matter of fact there are almost as many different kinds of Christianity as there are men. All the great types which we have distinguished in other religions reappear here. By what right, then, do we differentiate Christianity from other religions? Wherein does its superiority consist?

Here modern science gives us a perfectly definite answer. The distinctive thing about Christianity is Christ. He is its new contribution to the cause of religion. The differences of which we have spoken are only the persistence on new soil of the old types whose roots lie deep in the past. They are not Christianity. They are only the raw material out of which Christianity is made. Christianity is the effect which has been produced upon these old types by the new spirit which Jesus has introduced. Christianity is Christ, so far as he has yet become incarnate in humanity.

We have here just what we need, an explanation and an incentive. We have an explanation of the differences which exist between Christians. They are the survival of the pre-Christian in Christianity. We have a standard by means of which we can adjust them. The gift which we offer to the men of other religions is the remedy by which we must purify our own.

This does not mean that we are to admit nothing into Christianity which we cannot prove to have been historically derived from Jesus. Christianity is not simply the reproduction of Jesus' teaching; it is something much grander and more wonderful. It is the expression of his life. All that is alive grows, that is to say, it changes. It is always taking up into itself new materials and fashioning for itself new forms, but it is change according to a plan. The spirit within sets bounds to the life in its outward reach, and directs it to a goal as yet unseen. It is so in the Christian religion. The spirit of Jesus is the test of Christianity, and the justification of creed and doctrine and institution alike must be found in the extent to which they make more real to the imagination of men and more controlling over the will the unseen Father whom he came to reveal.

And so the last word of the new theology is the first word of the old evangelism: Come to Jesus. Test your life by him; make him Lord of your thought, King of your purposes, Savior and Friend of your soul. Lift up your eyes upon the world in which you live, this changeful, baffling world, where so much is fascinating and so much heartbreaking, and see him slowly molding it by his spirit after the pattern his Father has set. Dare to believe that he will have his way in the end.

It is no new gospel, then, that the new theology brings to us, only the old gospel set in a new light; and yet in a very true sense it is a new gospel. It is new in the freshness of its appeal, since it comes to us by another channel and seeks its evidence in familiar quarters. It is new in the breadth of its foundation, since it is based upon an introduction of all available facts and can face the last word of modern discovery with an even mind, sure that it will bring nothing to be feared. It is new, as every fresh experience of an old fact is new to the man who has lived it over again with that openness of mind, that attention of the will, and that large faith in the overshadowing presence of a God of wisdom and of truth which is the spirit of science at its best. The preacher who has put this to the proof in his own experience will no longer be afraid of the new theology. On the contrary, he will welcome it as an indispensable ally in the supreme task to which his life is given, the preaching of the gospel of that living Christ who is the spring of all progress and the goal of all endeavor, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

OUR SPIRITUAL INHERITANCE IN THE DOCTRINE OF THE INCARNATION

CHARLES W. GILKEY
Pastor of the Hyde Park Baptist Church, Chicago

The great doctrines of historic Christianity may become to us, their heirs, either a liability or an asset, according to the way in which we treat them and the categories under which we place them in our attempts to determine the status of Christianity in our modern world. If we treat them as finally authoritative formulae of the ultimate composition of truth, or even as hard-and-fast rails on which the wheels of our thought must closely run in order to reach its destination without disaster, then every thoughtful modern man who knows and shares the spirit of his time must reckon them as intellectual liabilities for which no counterbalancing amounts of personal piety, ecclesiastical dignity, or fervor of assertion can entirely compensate. But if, on the other hand, we regard them (to borrow the fine figure of a distinguished bishop who is himself an inspiring leader of the modern church militant) as watchwords, or better still, as ancient and triumphant battle-flags, in Christianity's age-long warfare against error and wrong and sin; if we follow them, not as set rails, but as broad highways for Christian progress, indicating not so much a prescribed path as the general direction to be pursued, where necessary over roads roughly parallel, by the entire advancing army, and promising an ultimate attainment of its common goal—then they are clearly to be reckoned as spiritual assets of our modern Christianity whose religious value we have hardly begun to realize or appreciate.

This is notably true of these customs, traditions, and teachings which through the centuries have gathered around the Christmas season. Whatever the origin of the Christmas customs which we still so universally keep, we recognize them, in spite of occasional exaggerations, as beautiful and appropriate expressions of the Christmas spirit of peace and good-will toward men. Whatever historical criticism may finally decide about the